

# An Ode to Obsessions

Kimintē Kimhēkim is celebrating his family’s hearts and pearls.

Imagine being a descendent of an ancient Korean royal family. Traces of your lineage permeate museums in the form of antique celadon and gold crowns. The *gayageum*, a traditional plucked zither that typically has 12 strings, is linked to your roots. Even period K-dramas have attempted to reimagine the lives of your ancestors. Turns out, this is the reality of rising South Korean designer Kimintē Kimhēkim. His eponymous label Kimhēkim celebrates his family’s artisanal legacy that dates back to the Gaya dynasty with couture-level creations that pair minimalist tailoring and streetwear-inspired silhouettes with romantic touches. Picture power suits, grungy biker jackets and loose denim sets embellished with opulent pearl strands. Hair that is meticulously braided or left in wispy curls to form sculptural dresses. The *maedeup*, a traditional Korean knotting technique, is subverted to create delicate fishnet-like tunics and inspire abstract prints on high-neck tops. The best compliment the blossoming designer could have received was an invitation to join the prestigious Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode just three years after the label’s founding in 2016. Fun fact: He’s also the youngest member from South Korea to be inducted. Since the brand’s spring-summer 2020 debut at Paris Fashion Week, celebrities like Blackpink’s Lisa, Gigi Hadid and Elle Fanning have all joined Kimhēkim’s bow, heart and pearl-filled universe. Where did his passion for fashion begin?

According to him, it was all thanks to his grandmother who taught him how to sew. Later, they would spend time together making clothes for Barbie dolls. “She was my best friend and mentor,” Kimhēkim reflected. “The techniques I learnt from her stick with me until now. I believe that they subconsciously make their way into my collections even today.” At the age of 19, Kimhēkim moved to Paris to study fashion at Studio Berçot, later cutting his teeth at different houses such as Balenciaga under Nicolas Ghesquière. For the brand’s latest fall-winter 2024 collection, *Obsession N°11 Puzzle*, the designer looked back at these early days in the City of Light. Specifically, reminiscing on times spent digging through vintage shops to construct new personal looks. Delving deeper into what fashion means to him, Kimhēkim raises the notion of it being a “decorative art”. His reasoning echoes the philosophical and often existential nature of his designs. “Fashion begins with an awareness of one’s own distinctiveness,” he shared. “Decorative art is about finding the balance between your inner self and outer appearance, and acknowledging this uniqueness.”

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KIMINTĒ KIMHĒKIM





**MANIFESTO: Your fall-winter 2024 collection, *Obsession N°11 Puzzle*, spotlights upcycled vintage pieces. What inspired this?**

**KIMINTĒ KIMHĒKIM:** Before I started this collection, I was thinking about my days in Paris when I used to search through vintage fashion stores to create my looks. I worked with vintage pieces that I found in Seoul and gave new life to them by transforming them into unexpected shapes such as turning two male-oriented blazers into a new dress, a trench coat into a skirt and a pair of denim jeans into a corset. I really enjoy this process of creation.

**M** Tell us about the collection’s design process.

**KK** For this season, I began collecting my fave items from vintage stores in Seoul, deciding the elements to put together and creating something new. Especially this season, the process of creation itself became the inspiration.

**M** What nuanced ways did this collection call to your South Korean heritage?

**KK** We worked on the theme of the Korean traditional knot in *Obsession N°7 Link-up*. We found a modern way to apply the knots to our ankle boots and derby shoes this season.

**M** *Obsession N°11 Puzzle* also gave us a glimpse at a new Asics collaboration. Tell us more about this.

**KK** It was an opportunity offered by Asics. As of now, it is a sneak peek at a future collaboration that will be released in fall-winter 2025!

**M** The collection also features a new line of *Tetris*-inspired bags.

**KK** The bags were crafted in collaboration with artisans of Seoul’s Bag Research Institute, who prioritise durability and structure in their craftsmanship. We were interested in developing new shapes focused on quality. I used to enjoy *Tetris* during my childhood and I thought it matched with *Obsession N°11 Puzzle* very well.

**M** Pearls, bows, and hearts are key Kimhëkim codes. What about these romantic touches speak to you?



**KK** They are my favourite elements as they are feminine yet strong. I want to use these elements to express my mood.

**M** The heart also symbolises self-love in your universe. Why is this message important?

**KK** Fashion starts from self-love, so [this message] is important to me. Especially the black heart as it symbolises every kind of love in the world since black is the shade you get when you mix everything together.

**M** You lived in Paris for 10 years. What was your biggest takeaway?

**KK** During my stay in Paris, I truly enjoyed learning how to create

my own style and understanding craftsmanship by working in different fashion houses. It was a once in a lifetime experience for me and has helped build my fashion house.

**M** What have you learnt about yourself while growing this brand?

**KK** During these years, the team and I have been through thick and thin together. We are progressively growing and through this, I have learnt how to value the process.

**M** What do you wish you saw more of in the fashion industry?

**KK** I think we should value feedback from the audience. The interaction with people should be prioritised over

content for the internet. I want to see more events that happen for the people who are there.

**M** You strive to bring Kimhëkim beyond fashion. What else is in store?

**KK** We are experimenting in different sectors such as homeware, cosmetics, perfume, music, video and even performance.  
[www.kimhekim.com](http://www.kimhekim.com)





